1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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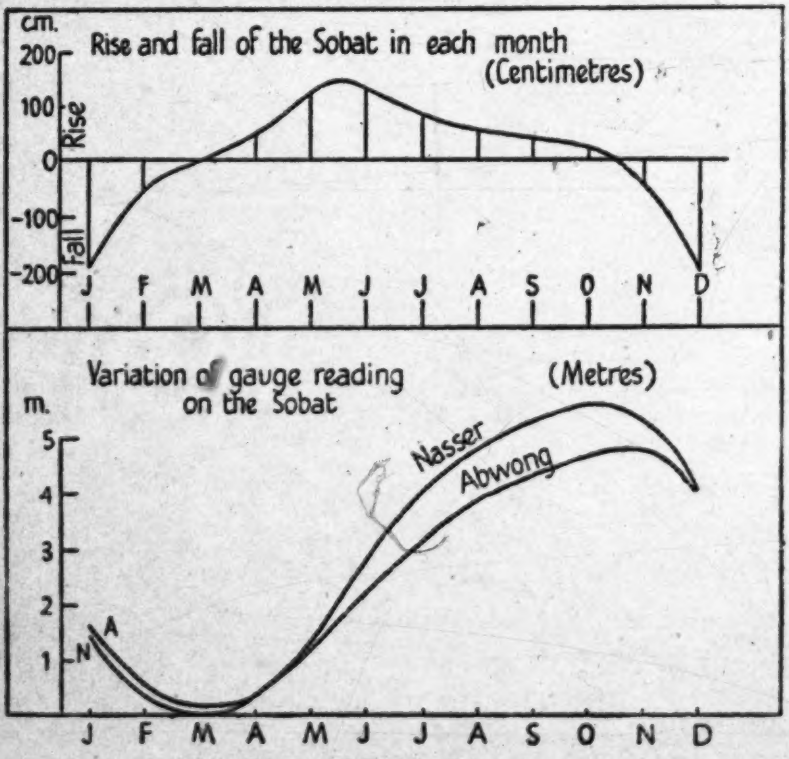
Highlands; and the Pibor which flows from the same direction and also drains to a lesser extent the northern slopes of the Plateau of the Great Lakes and the Sudan Plains. The Bahr el Zeraf is another channel of the Bahr el Jebel.[1] All these rivers flood at the time of the rains and, owing to its flatness, the country is turned into a vast morass.



Rise and fall of the Sobat river.
(Physical Department of the Egyptian Government.)

The whole of Nuerland is an almost dead level plain, covered during the rains with high grasses reaching to the waists, and near streams, where they are higher and coarser, to the shoulders of the tall Nuer. It approximately coincides with the extension of true savannah in the Sudan. Here and there are patches of thornwood forest, but often no tree is visible in any direction

[1] For an excellent description of these rivers see H. E. Hurst and P. Phillips, *The Nile Basin*, vol. i, 1931.

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940 .
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and a desolate waste stretches everywhere to the horizon (Plates VI and XI (*a*) and (*b*)). A belt of forest sometimes lines a river where its banks are high, but never extends far inland. North of the Sobat, on its lower reaches, true savannah gives way to thorny savannah and beyond the southern extremities of Eastern Nuerland one enters park-like savannah forest which becomes thicker the farther south one proceeds, though it usually turns to marshland as the Bahr el Jebel is approached. The southern borders of Western Nuerland fringe ironstone country, likewise covered with savannah forest. As a rule when the rivers are in flood they have no banks and the country lying on either side of them is swamp threaded with wide lagoons, often running parallel to the main channel. This is especially the case with the Bahr el Jebel and the greater part of the Bahr el Ghazal and the Bahr el Arab, the Jebel and the Ghazal being practically united by surface water in the rainy season. The Bahr el Zeraf is bounded by swamp to a lesser degree and the lower reaches of the Sobat not at all.

This vast plain is threaded with depressions, like that shown on Plate XIX (*b*), which run in all directions, often crossing one another, and linking up with the main rivers. Where continuous, these depressions have the appearance of small rivers, though water seldom flows in them. While rain is falling on the country the main rivers flood into these depressions, making a network of waterways which prevents drainage from the saturated earth, so that the rainwater lies everywhere in deep puddles which slowly extend till by the middle of June the whole country, except for occasional higher land, is inundated. The water remains several inches deep till September, and Nuerland has the appearance of a great grass-covered swamp; there are streams, lagoons, and pools wherever there are slight depressions, and islands, on which are perched villages, wherever there are ridges and knolls. The rivers begin to fall about the same time as the rains decline, the fall being most rapid on the Sobat (diagram on p. 53). The blazing sun then quickly evaporates the surface water, while the streams, instead of being channels of overflow from the rivers, now feed them, and by the middle of November the grasses are dry enough to be fired. By the end of December a great part of the country has been burnt

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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VII

In most years wild fruits, seeds, and roots are not an important item in Nuer diet. Their country is mainly treeless and fruits therefore few; only 'wild dates' (*Balanites aegyptiaca*), found in occasional patches to the west of the Nile and in more extensive stretches to the east, provide much sustenance. The fruits ripen from about January to March and both the kernels and their sweet fleshy covering are eaten. A number of other fruits are eaten, mainly by children. Initiated youths refuse most of them. The seeds and roots of water-lilies (*Nymphaea lotus*), which are found in pools and lagoons in the early dry season are much relished. The seeds of 'wild rice' (*Oryza Barthii*) are collected and a number of wild plants that grow on village sites are used as seasoning for porridge. In famine years much greater attention is paid to the wild harvest. 'Wild dates' are then a great stand-by and people eat a wide range of fruits, ripening mainly in the early part of the drought, which they neglect when hunger is not severe, and make use of bush-yams and the seeds of wild sorghum and other grasses.

VIII

It will have been noted that fishing, hunting, and collecting are dry-season occupations and produce during that season the necessary supplement to an insufficient milk diet. In the wet season, when these activities are no longer profitable and the milk yield tends to fall off, the heavy rains, which cause the changes responsible for these losses in supply, produce conditions suitable for horticulture, impossible in the drought, that will replace them. The variation in food-supply throughout the year and its sufficiency for life at all seasons is thus determined by the annual cycle of oecological changes. Without grain in the wet season Nuer would be in a parlous state; and since it can be stored they can, also, to a small extent, make provision against famine in the drought.

Climatic conditions together with flooding and the flatness of the country make it impossible to cultivate most Central African food plants in Nuerland, and the Nuer are especially unfortunate in having no root crop as a reserve in famine years.

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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135 Nuerland lacks the two raw materials that have played so important a part in the manufacture of primitive tools: iron and stone. Nuer have always been poor in iron objects. Till recently 411 they possessed very few iron spears, cherished as heirlooms, but used instead the straightened horns of antelope and buck, ebony wood, and the rib-bones of giraffe, all of which are still used to-day, 442 though almost entirely in dances (Fig. 11). Wooden hoes were used for gardening, and are still sometimes so used to-day. Iron 301 bells (Fig. 4) are rare and highly prized even at the present time, and in the old days iron rings and bracelets were important pieces of property. Wooden bells and ivory and leather rings and bracelets took their place in common use. Nuer have no knowledge of 325 smelting and little of the blacksmith's art. I have never seen a forge and, though there are certainly some blacksmiths, their art is crude and may be regarded as a recent innovation, at any rate in most parts of Nuerland. Spears bought from Arab merchants are beaten out in the cold.

135 Nuerland also lacks any kind of hard stone. Indeed, outside villages I have never seen a stone. They are sometimes brought 442 from neighbouring areas and employed as hammers, for smoothing 323 metal ornaments, for rubbing skins, and so on. Grinding grain seems to have been a recent introduction. The grinder is made from thornwood and the grindstone from baked marsh mud mixed with finely pounded potsherds (Fig. 12). With clay, mud, and sand, Nuer also make pots, grain-bins, pipes, toys, hearthstones, and firescreens; construct the walls of byres and huts; and coat floors and those parts of homesteads they wish to keep smooth and clean.

137 Nature, which denies them iron and stone, is niggardly in her gift of wood. Large trees are rare. Thornwood and low brush- 322 wood provide timber for building, spear-shafts, harpoon-shafts, clubs (Frontispiece and Plate VIII), pestles, neck-rests, baskets, and winnowing trays. Probably no trees in Nuerland are suitable for carving and Nuer possess no wooden utensils. Even the ebony they use for making spears is not found in their country. Ambatch-trees grow in some parts of the swamp areas and from it is made an object which serves as a parrying stick, tobacco pouch, pillow, and seat (Plate XXIX). Byre and kraal fires are fed with [372] dried dung, and wood fuel is only employed in the kitchen—grasses and millet stalks sometimes being used as a substitute. Grasses, millet stalks, and some plants are also used for various purposes: rafters, windscreens, thatching, cord, basketwork, &c. Gourds are cultivated for dairy utensils.

237 Lacking iron and stone Nuer thus make use of vegetable and earthy materials instead. Animal products are also a valuable

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
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The mean monthly rainfall up to 1927 is given in millimetres by Hurst and Phillips* for the Bahr el Jebel and Bahr el Ghazal area (Western and part of Eastern Nuerland) and for the Sobat and Baro area (most of Eastern Nuerland) as follows:— 132

	Bahr el Jebel and Bahr el Ghazal		*Sobat and Baro*	
January	4	millimetres.	6	millimetres.
February	13	,,	14	,,
March	38	,,	33	,,
April	92	,,	80	,,
May	131	,,	137	,,
June	134	,,	158	,,
July	161	,,	173	,,
August	168	,,	199	,,
September	145	,,	153	,,
October	112	,,	90	,,
November	43	,,	48	,,
December	8	,,	10	,,
Year	1049	,,	1091	,,

The rainfall is fairly even over the whole of Nuerland. It is not nearly so heavy as it is to the east, on the Abyssinian Plateau, or to the south, in the basin of the Victoria Nile or in the neighbourhood of the Nile-Congo Divide. The effects, however, are felt far more than in these regions because the beds of clayey soil hold up the water and the flatness of the country prevents surface drainage. Moreover, 132 the rivers flood at the same time as the rains pour down and the 133 numerous swampy watercourses which thread their way through Nuerland are prevented from discharging water from their mouths.

The whole of Nuerland is an almost dead flat plain, in the main 133 treeless and during the rains covered with high grasses which reach to 137 the waist and, near streams where they are higher and coarser, reach to the shoulders of the tall Nuer. In my experience they grow somewhat higher in Eastern Nuerland than in Western Nuerland. At

* The Nile Basin by H. E. Hurst and P. Phillips, 1931, Vol. I, p. 47.

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
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this season of the year[1] traversing open country is always difficult and even along the paths inconvenient, especially as the land is inundated at the same time. One can just see the horns of the great oxen at pasture. Only in the habitual grazing grounds on the slopes of slightly elevated ridges, where the cattle and the close-cropping sheep and goats have kept down the shorter species of grasses, is there any freedom of movement.

137

Nuerland approximately coincides with the extension of true savannah in the Sudan. Here and there are stretches of thornwood forest but they are never extensive. A belt of forest sometimes lines a river where its banks are high, *e.g.*, on the Sobat and along sections of the Bahr el Ghazal and the Bahr el Arab, but it never extends far inland. North of the Sobat, on its lower reaches, true savannah gives way to thorny savannah and beyond the southern extremities of Eastern Nuerland one enters parklike savannah forest which becomes thicker the further south one proceeds, though it always turns to marshland as the Bahr el Jebel is approached. To the south of Western Nuerland one touches the fringes of ironstone country, likewise covered with savannah forest.

133

Though thornwood forest is found along sections of the rivers, as a rule when they are in flood they have no banks and the country lying on either side of them is swamp. This is especially the case with the whole course of the Bahr el Jebel through Nuerland and the greater part of the Bahr el Ghazal. The Bahr el Zeraf channel is bounded by swamp to a lesser degree and the lower reaches of the Sobat not at all. According to my own observations the area of swamp is smaller than is generally supposed.

This vast plain is threaded with depressions which run in all directions, often crossing one another, and linking up with the main rivers. Where continuous these depressions have the appearance of small rivers, though water seldom flows in them. While rain is falling on the country the main rivers flood into these depressions threading the land with a network of waterways which prevent drainage from the saturated earth so that the rainwater lies every-

[1] [i.e., during the rain season--Analyst]

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
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the country to the east (Gaawär country) to such an extent that a journey which, in the ordinary course of events (in the dry season) is a matter of some inconvenience owing to the uncertainty of finding water, had to be performed for a distance of 80 miles in a canoe. And, in the same year, Nyerol post, thirty five miles to the south of Abwong, on the River Sobat (Lou country), which was usually supplied over a waterless tract (in the dry season) was only with the greatest of difficulty kept in touch with civilization owing to the country in between them being almost entirely under water.*

By November the Sobat has commenced to fall and to drain the streams which serve as its channels of overflow in flood. These streams now contribute to its volume of water with the result that the fall of water at Nasser is registered at the Sobat mouth three weeks or more later.† While the land is being drained by the Sobat the rains have ceased and the sun has evaporated surface water. The grasses are burnt and the country takes on its dry season appearance of a fissured waterless waste. The change from wet-season conditions to dry-season conditions is sudden.

Travelling in February from the Sobat to Pathai and thence eastward to Pul Fadoi, along the newly-made motor road, one traverses slightly higher ground through a thin *heglig* forest which screens the full desolation of the country, for, though in reality it offers scanty shade, it gives an appearance of verdure and freshness, and the ground is carpeted with the oval fawn-coloured fruits of the *heglig*. Game is plentiful and forest pools numerous. But the western part of Lou country, occupied by the Mor tribal section, from Pul Fadoi eastwards for over a hundred kilometres, is bleak and its bleakness is, on the whole, typical of the rest of Lou country and of Nuerland in general. It is thickly covered with dead grasses, from 4 to 8 feet high, except where it has been lately burnt for then one sees only wide stretches of charred earth, fissured into a million fragments, like a gigantic ill-fitting jigsaw puzzle, and strewn with burnt stems of grass and with

* Jackson, *op. cit.*

† Hurst and Phillips, *op. cit.*

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
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ashes. Where the grasses have been burnt some time ago green shoots have sprung up around the charred stems. Here and there stand isolated, thorny, shadeless trees, stunted by fire and spreading out their black tortured branches. Often no tree is visible in any direction and a desolate waste stretches everywhere to the horizon. The burning of the tall grasses has revealed low termite mounds, blackened by fire like the ground from which they rise. There is smoke and flame where parts of the country are still on fire. This country is uninhabited in the rains, being under water, but in February one sees occasional cattle camps around the deeper pools.

In Western Nuerland conditions are in the main similar though there are certain differences. Western Nuerland lies between the Bahr el Jebel and the Bahr el Ghazal and extends to the north of the Bahr el Ghazal as far as the southern boundary of Kordofan Province. It consists for the most part of 'cotton soil' and like Eastern Nuerland is so dead flat that if one mounts a small termite mound one can see in all directions as far as the eye can reach. Here and there are ridges of higher ground. These village sites are always inland because, whereas the higher banks of the Sobat and Pibor allow occupation here and there, the Bahr el Jebel and the Bahr el Ghazal have no banks in their flood seasons and their beds are bordered by wide marshes. These marshes often run for several miles inland and there are very few spots on the Bahr el Jebel where it is possible to land and penetrate into the interior of the country, even in the dry season.

I have already expressed an opinion that the area covered by swamp vegetation has been exaggerated. That is an empirical judgment. The marsh vegetation, generally referred to as *sudd* in the Sudan, is a solid mass of water plants, the principal among them being papyrus (*cyperus Papyrus*), '*Um sluf*' (*Panicum pyramidale*) and the common reed (*Phragmites Communis*), to which cling a number of swimming plants (*Utricularia, Vallisneria, Azolla, Pistia, Aldrovandia, etc.*). Creepers especially *Vigna Niletica* and *Ipomaea*, bind the marsh plants together into a tangled mass. Here and there grow patches of ambatch trees.* Lagoons run out of the

* Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, pp. 302-3.

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
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133 Bahr el Jebel, separated from the river by narrow stretches of papyrus (from river), and they often run parallel to the course of the river.

161 From the deck of a steamer passing down the Bahr el Jebel there is no sign of human occupation and a traveller might judge the country to be without inhabitants. But inland ridges support a [36] large population. These ridges are, as a rule, widely separated and one treks often enough ten to fifteen miles between one village and the next. In places there are broader belts of high ground covered 133 by thick thornwood forest, as in parts of Rengyan country, or wide •137 sandy ridges covered with scrub and palms (*doleib* and *dom*), as in parts of Dok and Rengyan countries. Those used to the bare monotony of Nuerland will be surprised to meet for the first time these sandy stretches which, with the classic beauty of the *dom* palms that surmount them, seem out of place in savannah plains. In the extreme south, in Nyuong country, which I have not visited, the clay runs into the ironstone belt and savannah gives way to savannah forest in which *Anogeissus Leocarpus* predominates. In the north of Western Nuerland, to the north of the Bahr el Ghazal, in Lek and Bul countries, a maze of watercourses and lagoons running in all directions impede progress for the first few miles inland from the river. Then an open treeless plain extends to the borders of Kordofan. Bul country on the lower reaches of the Bahr el Arab is said to be for the greater part under water in the rainy season, though ridges of sand and forest occur on its northern and western limits.

Most of Western Nuerland is under water in the rains and the Bahr el Jebel and the Bahr el Ghazal are practically united by surface water on the intervening plain. Nevertheless the Western Nuer are probably better favoured for village sites than the Eastern Nuer.

I entered Western Nuerland at Adok on October 1st, 1936. This year was drier than usual but in a seventeen days tour round the country we walked almost the whole time in several inches of water and were often up to our armpits when crossing depressions which are constantly met on the route. How laborious such trekking is can

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
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be imagined when one has to stamp one's way through water for ten miles at a stretch. The rank grasses prevent one from leaving the paths and the paths form miniature depressions down which water flows so that it is like walking in the bed of a tiny stream, a sticky bed where every step requires an effort to extract the foot. Rengyan country is amazing at this season of the year. One walks for miles through water to emerge suddenly on a ridge, screened by high grasses till one begins to mount it. Here is a village. One walks through the village to descend into water the other side, and then through miles of water to the next inhabited island. To live in such a country one should be amphibious, like the Nuer, who seem to be in no way inconvenienced by what are to Europeans appalling conditions.

The rains cease in November but so saturated is the earth that a late heavy shower will again inundate the country for 48 hours.

The dry season among the Western Nuer is not so severe as it is among the Eastern Nuer because there is never a shortage of water and the villages are never far from deep lagoons and streams, nor even from the main rivers themselves with their broad fringe of marshes. It is probably only in an exceptionally dry year that the larger inland watercourses entirely dry up. Probably this is in the main due to the fact that the Bahr el Jebel and the Bahr el Ghazal do not sink in their beds like the Sobat and Pibor, since they are fed by permanently flowing streams and have enormous lake and marsh reservoirs. The water of streams and lagoons in Western Nuerland is therefore not so rapidly drained as in Eastern Nuerland. Certainly the water in big streams in Dok country seems to be permanent and in walking through Lek country as late as February in 1930 we had to wade frequently through deep swampy streams and lagoons.

Nuer have expressions to denote the natural features of their country. A treeless plain they call *ghau mi dee* or, in contrast to dry elevated ridges, *pan*. A ridge or knoll is called *kwir* and *thur* or, in reference to its suitability for human occupation, *gwaadh wer*. Land which is partly inundated in the wet season, but not sufficiently to be called swampy, and is therefore suitable for growing millet, is called

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
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824 233 those grasses which are *wal ghak*, cattle-grasses, and those plants which are eaten regularly by cattle, sheep, and goats or are used for veterinary purposes. One is only given names of plants with hesitation or given different names by different persons when they have no 824 particular value or use. One should not, however, bring leaves and flowers home and ask a Nuer for the names, for this confuses him, but he knows them at once when he sees them growing, as he would normally see them. Not the form of the plant alone but its form together with its habitat enable him quickly to identify it, for some plants are found in gardens, others on sandy ridges, others in the open plain, and others near streams.

824 It is probable that Nuer expansion has to a considerable degree been influenced by the distribution of pasture grasses. I am not 167 a botanist and can only record a few of the main grasses which are •137 found in both Western and Eastern Nuerland without being able to give their distribution in these latitudes. However, Nuer have told me that the reason they did not oust the Ngok Dinka from their enclave was that their pastures are not up to the grazing standards Nuer demand for their cattle. It has also been pointed out to me by Nuer that Shillukland is very poor in grazing grasses, a statement which seems to me, from a very slight acquaintance with Shilluk country, to be true.

137 There are some Nuer grasses the cattle like, some they will eat if 233 they are hungry, and some which they refuse at all times. The richness of pasture varies at different times of the year and in different places and it is these seasonal and local variations which determine Nuer annual, and daily, movements.

132 In the season of *Ruil*, the springtime of the year when the early 137 rains fall, all the grasses either send up new shoots or begin to grow again after several months of arrested growth. This is a season of 233 fatness for the cattle. All the pasture grasses are short and tender and they can choose the most luscious of them and graze on them to their hearts' content. In this time of plenty they nibble the heads of the grasses of which they are not greatly fond while they graze to the ground a favourite gram like *gau* (*Andropogon Gayanus Kunth*).

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But when the rainy season (*lit*) is well advanced, grazing becomes more difficult, partly because the country is inundated and partly because some of the best grasses like *dut cieng nath* (*Echinochloa pyramidalis Hitchc. and Chase*) grow tall and rank and are no longer favoured by the cattle, though this particular grass which grows in the open plain and may, perhaps, be regarded as the characteristic grass of Western Nuerland, does not grow so course as many others and is the great stand-by of the cattle in a bad year. Other grasses which are eaten in the early rains but become too rank in the middle of the rains to appeal to the cattle are *dik* (*Sorghum dimidiatum stapf*), *dinding* (*Ischaemum brachyatherum Fenzl*), both grasses of the open plains, *yiw* (*Rottboellia exaltata L.f.*), which is found mainly away from streams and grows best on sandy ridges, and when full-grown is covered with spines on account of which it is also called *lep yang*, 'cow's tongue;' and *yuol* (*Pennisetum ramosum Schweinf.*) a grass of the open plains which has spiky heads that when it is full grown, run into the eyes of the cattle and make them sore so that they have to be bathed.

Therefore at the height of the rains, especially in a flood year, grazing is often a serious problem and cattle have to rely largely on the short grasses of the village ridges. This is where Lou country has an advantage over the Eastern Jikany districts and why many villages in Western Nuerland are so well placed. Such grasses are *jual jok* 'dog's tail' (*Setaria pallide-fusca Stapf and Hubbard*), and *bugh* (*Eriochloa nubica Hack. and Stapf.*), neither of which cattle relish, though *bugh* is eaten avidly by goats and sheep. Another ridge grass is *mulith* (*Cynodon Dactylon Pers.*). These grasses are supplemented by grasses of the open plains that grow at the foot of the ridges, particularly *dut cieng nath*, and have been beaten down by rain. In those parts of Nuerland which are not favoured by wide ridges the cattle may starve in a year of very high flood.

Early in the season of *jiow*, the windy season that succeeds the rains and is the first part of the dry season, the grasses dry up and seed. It is not a good time for the cattle since the tall grasses impede their movement, no longer provide succulent pasturage, and may

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shelter beasts of prey. Nuer hasten to burn them as soon as they are dry enough, usually in the latter part of November and in the early part of December. If they are fired too early they are only half burnt and though new shoots spring up the old charred stems remain standing.

Some grasses which cattle eat in the wet season fail to come up after firing till the following rains. Such are *wal* (*or dut*) *lowy*, 'lion's grass' which grows in the open plains; an excellent grazing grass called *gugh* (*Brachiaria obtusiflora Stapf*), also of the open plains and favouring shallow depressions; *tiil mouth*, also of the open plains and good pasture in the rainy season.

Other grasses send up tender young shoots a few days after they are burnt. Probably this is due to their long roots which tap water held up in the clay beds and it may be partly due also to their clump formation which protects the core of the plants from the flames. If it were not for the fact that some grasses send up new shoots after firing it would be difficult for the cattle to survive. It would, I think, be impossible for them to survive inland in a dry year. Some of the main grasses which come up again, though they do not grow till the next rains, are *twät* (*sporobolus pyramidalis Beauv.*), a grass found mainly near sandy ridges and not greatly favoured by the cattle; *ghol* (*Setaria sp.*) which also the cattle do not much care for; *riith* (*Setaria Lynesii Stapf and Hubbard*) a grass found mainly along shallow depressions; and *gaw*. But the two grasses mainly to be depended on, and both much eaten by cattle, are *dut ciang math* and a very tall grass, found near streams and pools, called *dut in lum* or *dut jaangui*. Some of the grasses which come up again grow near village sites and are therefore of little use because the cattle are in camps in the open plains, *e.g.*, *twät* and *ghol*. It seems to depend to some extent on the amount of rainfall to what extent grasses send up shoots and in a very dry year grasses which would in a wet year send up shoots may not do so.

After the grasses have been burnt the cattle have a good time as they can wander as they please, being no longer impeded by surface

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water or rank vegetation, and as they can graze on the tender shoots. But when the dry season advances pasture becomes scarcer but cattle can graze again over the shoots. Eventually, however, they have to fall back on marsh grasses, especially in a dry year when such grasses of the plains as *dut cieng nath* may fail (it is said *ce lōr* or *ce juac lōr*). Nuer then make for rivers, swamps, lagoons, and deep marshy depressions where they can always find enough vegetation to keep the cattle alive. The chief marsh grasses are *poon* (*Oryza Barthi A. cheval*), *gïth*, *bungk*, and *kuth yang*. Nuer say that no grasses give more milk than these if the cows can obtain them in abundance.

Cattle also eat a number of plants and these are a useful addition to their diet. A good number of such plants, however, grow in cultivations and are therefore not accessible to the cattle, but some spring up in old garden sites and in the neighbourhood of habitations. Nevertheless cattle are grass grazers and it is mainly sheep and goats which graze on plants, and they eat also the leaves of young trees. Goats will eat almost anything but sheep are daintier feeders and will not touch some of the bitter plants and shrubs that goats devour. The plants eaten by sheep or goats, or by both, generally grow in old cultivations or on old homestead and camp sites. Some of those recorded are *Cak*, 'milk,' so-called because it oozes out a thick white juice when cut, *tiltil* (*Boerhaavia repens L.*) another plant called *tiltil* (*Indigofera Sp.*), *Wangrial* (*Justicia matammensis* (*Schweef*) *oliv.*), *nhr yiouuu* (*Emilia sagittata DC*), *mut ngai*, 'spear of the francolin' (*schkuria foliosa A. Rich.*), *wiir* (*Portulaca Quadrifida L.*), *kuthakdet* (*Glycine Boriensii Bak*), *tac* (*Ipomoea reptans Poir*), *pac* (*Urochloa* ?), *nyiik indit pin*, *tiecdong* (*cyperus rotundus L.*), *tiec*, *belagak gordet*, *kir jaakuak* ('crow's pumpkins'), *thil in cōt*, etc., etc.

XI.

Besides having to adapt themselves to conditions of water supply and vegetation Nuer have to adjust themselves to conditions of insect-life which is an ever-present obstacle to cattle husbandry in their country. The cattle get no rest from stinging flies and ticks from

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vary much from month to month for there are few seasonal changes at this time of the year. As the river falls it is possible to fish in lagoons and shallows and to bathe on its sandy bed. Then the lagoons dry up. When the river rises fish swim in the weeds and rushes and along some streams they are easily speared from the banks. The banks of the Sobat are too steep for this purpose. There are no longer shallows and bathing is a hasty dip for there is danger from crocodiles. The grazing grounds are changed from time to time as they become exhausted and as streams and lagoons dry up. At Yakwac there was succulent pasturage only where marsh plants still retained their moisture at the river end of lagoons. The people are still in camp when the first rains fall at the end of April or early in May and then there is everywhere an abundance of pasturage. The brown bush becomes green and the baked fissured earth a sodden mire. Dry lagoons become inland flowing streams. The scorching sun is clouded.

On the Sobat we guessed that the first rains had fallen inland by the migration of wild animals from its banks. Giraffe now left us for inland pastures where they would not have to face death every time they approached the river. Other animals likewise moved southwards, even the gazelle. On the northern bank, however, buffaloes still came to the river to drink and were attacked by hungry Nuer. Animals and men must obey the seasons and when there is no water except in inland lakes and lagoons, men, cattle, and wild beasts must drink at the same places. One can hear them at night cautiously coming to the pools to drink. [illegible]

In May one knows that the move back to the wet season villages will shortly take place not only by cloudy skies and movements of game, but also by camp activities. The women are the first to leave camp and one meets them along paths, carrying their household goods in rectangular cane baskets. Youths leave camp early in the morning to cut stakes, generally of thornwood (bwoo) and they spend a large part of the day shaping them into tethering pegs. They also twist new cord. The weather being cooler people do not feel so keenly the need to sleep towards noon. Everyone is becoming restless and

8:Howell E, G-5 (1942-1944)1954
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131 [61] 58,000 square miles and, as it has a population of about 350,000, it will be seen that the density of population is low. Some areas are, however, more densely populated than others.

361 During the rainy season, roughly from May until November but varying from year to year, the people occupy higher ground which is better drained and comparatively free from flood. This higher ground, where they build their permanent villages and cattle-byres and have their cultivations, is limited and widely distributed. In some areas it is concentrated in a series of narrow ridges, usually running parallel to the main channels of the rivers, in others dispersed in a series of isolated outcrops. Such natural features have their effects on the size of communities, on communications and therefore social contacts, and, as a result, on political and social structure, producing local variations of detail which make generalizations difficult.

133 137 Surrounding the higher ground are the vast areas of open grass plain with thickets of acacia bush,[1] intersected by a network of grass-choked watercourses and the main rivers whose flood-plains produce different ecological conditions and different associations of grass types. Each of these regions has its function in the seasonal activities, which largely concern animal husbandry, but in which crop production, the collection of natural vegetation, and fishing play an important part. It must be emphasized here that the Nuer economy is still essentially at subsistence level and that there is no specialization or organized trade.

I do not propose to enlarge here on the subject of grass associations and pasture utilization. It is worth noting, however, that apart from soil, temperature, and length of day, one of the most important factors in the determination of grass types is the depth and period of immersion during the rainy season. On the higher ground, where the Nuer build their permanent villages, comparatively flood-free conditions produce a mixture of perennial and a few annual grasses which [illegible] Below this level are the vast 'intermediate' plains, subject to accumulations of rainfall and overflow from the drainage channels, where the grasses are predominantly perennials (*Setaria* spp., *Hyparrhenia rufa*, &c.). These grasses are unpalatable and virtually useless except as bulk when in a dry and mature condition. So long as moisture is retained in the soil, however, they produce a green regrowth which provides valuable pasture, but in most areas the moisture is gone by the end of January, sometimes earlier. At this point, the cattle must be driven on to the riverain marshes, which, subject to deeper and longer inundation from the rivers and watercourses as well as from rain-flood, produce other types of perennial grasses (*Vossia cuspidata*, *Echinochloa pyramidalis*, *Oryza* spp., &c.). These grasses are of variable value during the dry season, but generally speaking provide green nutritive grazing

[1] Mainly *Acacia seyal* Del., *Acacia fistula* Schweinf., *Balanites aegyptiaca* Del., &c.

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throughout that period. This area is known as the *toic*,[1] and is of value for reasons other than pasture, for the pools and lagoons are full of fish which provide an important item of diet at that time of the year. These conditions determine the seasonal migrations of the Nuer in search of pasture for their cattle, cultivation, and other activities which are part of their economy. 133 137 [242]

Physical conditions varying from thick bush country, sandy ridges, open grasslands stretching mile after mile with scarcely a tree to break the horizon, to marshland and papyrus swamp, are found in all parts of Nuerland. In the Zeraf Valley, a few miles west of that river, there is a long and almost continuous ridge where the Lak, Thiang, and a few of the Gaawar have their permanent villages. The banks of the Zeraf are high and well defined in its lower reaches, and in some places villages are built close to the river's edge, but to the west the country tails away into swampier ground until it reaches the papyrus swamps of the Bahr el Jebel. A large proportion of Lak country and part of Thiang is covered with acacia bush, land which provides only poor grazing and an abundance of biting flies such as the striped *tabanids* which are the agent through which direct infection of trypanosomiasis is conveyed. For this reason Lak country is considered poor for cattle. The area on the east bank of the Zeraf is occupied by the majority of the Gaawar and is much less densely populated. High ground is more limited and dispersed, and the people have to contend with serious floods in their permanent settlements, but such conditions produce more plentiful grazing. In the east is the Duk Ridge, a series of sandy outcrops running parallel to the river about forty miles inland. This area was densely populated in Dinka times and in the early stages of the Nuer invasion, and it remains a refuge for the Gaawar in times of heavy flood. In the exceptional floods of 1917-18, which the Nuer refer to as *pilual*, the Duk ridge was packed with refugees coming from the rising waters. [136] [131]

The country occupied by the Lou Nuer has all the characteristics of Gaawar country, though the better drained land on which they build their villages is more concentrated, and there is no perennial river running through it. A few of the Lou move to the Sobat River during the dry season and many to the country bordering the Pibor River, but the rest remain along the *toics* left on the edges of the khor Fulluss and its tributaries. Those who move eastwards have been something of a problem to the Administration in recent years, for there is a tendency to settle permanently in Anuak country and sometimes over the border in Abyssinia. The cause of this movement is presumably increasing population in man and cattle and the desire 133 166

[1] This word has no exact parallel meaning than 'marshland' in English, and is often used very loosely to describe any area which provides pasture during the dry months of the year.

is everything well with your hoong? A fifth question sometimes asked is 'ci bagh?', 'has it dawned (well for you)?' Not all these questions are always asked, but often two or three of them are, and sometimes more. In the full greeting we therefore get a composite picture of easy sleep and fresh awakening, contentment, prayer, and a smoking hearth, that is, of a person at peace in himself.

This digression was made to explain the meaning of the expression 'akoricko' in prayer. The phrase is in harmony with some other expressions used in prayer: '*apwonyko puol*', 'may we be light', and '*apwonyko koc*', 'may we be cool'. *Pwony* means 'body' or 'self' and here it means 'self' in the sense of the person as an entire person, body and soul. There is no reason why a Nuer should want to be light or cool in a purely physical sense. What is intended is to ask that the people may be light not only in the sense of physical well-being but also in the sense of *puol koc*, of being light-hearted or joyful, free from burdens and troubles; and that they may be cool in the sense of not being anxious or worried, cool in the sense of calm. This is shown by a variant which is one of the commonest Nuer prayers, '*a yiegh newi koc*', which can in this context only be translated 'may the souls of the people be cool', though in other contexts *yiegh* can mean 'breath' or 'life'. Very often the word *thei* is added, '*a yiegh newi koce thei*', and this gives an emphasis: 'may the souls of the people be very cool'. Obviously Nuer are not asking, unless it be metaphorically, that their breath or life may be very cold. The word *koc* is also used in expressions of good will towards persons, especially in the blessing *apwonyan nat*', may you be cool', that is, 'may you be at peace'.[1]

The word *koc* can also mean 'soft' or 'tender', and though it is best translated 'cool' in prayers the two meanings may blend. Here again, Nuer clearly do not want to be physically soft. Indeed the expression '*koce thei*' in the physical sense of softness means when applied to men 'to be completely impotent sexually'. The idea of softness is seen in the metaphor often heard in prayers and invocations: 'may we tread on wild rice'. *Pwom*, wild rice, is, Nuer say, the softest of grasses to the feet, as it is also one of the

[1] The symbolism can at once be appreciated by ourselves, especially by those acquainted with the Vulgate and other Latin sacred texts where *refrigerium*, a cooling, is used in the mystical senses of 'consolation', 'mitigation', 'refreshing', and 'comfort'.

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●[137]

tenderest pasture grasses, being sometimes gathered to feed small calves by hand. Nuer speak of life as walking through pastures and they ask for a path that has no hidden dangers, that is, is free from evil, and for softness underfoot, that is, a mind at ease. Hence they petition also '*gwenyi ko kwel gwath me jalko ko*', 'make clear a way for us in the place where we journey', and '*gwenyi ko gwath*', 'clear for us a place'. Here again the sense is mainly allegorical. The words do not usually refer to any particular place or journey but to the journey through life, and the making clear of the way does not refer only, or even at all, to any particular dangers of travelling through the bush but to all the sufferings and evils which beset the life of man.

Peace and deliverance are the key-notes of these petitions. They are seen again in the phrase '*kwoth ngaci rum yiemi, romni yieko*', 'God, thou (who) knowest how to support [or care for] souls, support [or care for] our souls'. The general sense of the prayer is that God should protect those who supplicate him as a parent protects his helpless infant. This desire for peace, deliverance, and protection is summed up in another common petition: '*akoteko*', 'let us be'. I am not certain whether the verb here is *tek*, to be alive, or, as I think it is, *te*, to be. There is in any case a considerable overlap in meaning between the two words, and in this context there would not be any great difference in meaning between the one and the other, for the sense is: let us go on living and as we are. Nuer are asking for life, but not just life in the sense of living but of living abundantly, free from the troubles and sufferings which make life, as we say, not worth living. That this is the right interpretation is further suggested by another expression frequently heard in prayer, '*akoiepko*', which also has to be translated 'let us be', and here again signifies, and in a deeper moral sense, life in the mode and manner of leading it. The verb is *iebe*. It expresses a continuous state and can, I think, only be used of persons. It indicates a particular quality of a person which is part of his nature as that person and is therefore unchangeable, as in the phrases '*iebe kuaar*', 'he is a leopard-skin priest', '*iebe Nar*', 'I am a Jimaca clansman', '*iebe ran*', 'I am a *Nuer*' or 'I am a man', and *iebbe cuet*, 'we are (like) ants [in the sight of God]'.

It will have been observed that these expressions in Nuer prayers, as is the case among other peoples, are often repetitious, but rather in the form of parallelisms than of tautologies, for they

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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Nuer have said in sacrifices or about them I have preserved their sacrificial idiom. It must be understood, therefore, that in this context the word 'cow' seldom refers to a cow but almost always, when the victim is an animal, to an ox, a wether, or a castrated he-goat. In a sacrificial context Nuer also always speak of a cucumber-victim as '*yang*', 'cow'. 789

Should for some reason no beast be available Nuer may instead, or as a temporary expedient, sacrifice a small trailing knobbly

[137]

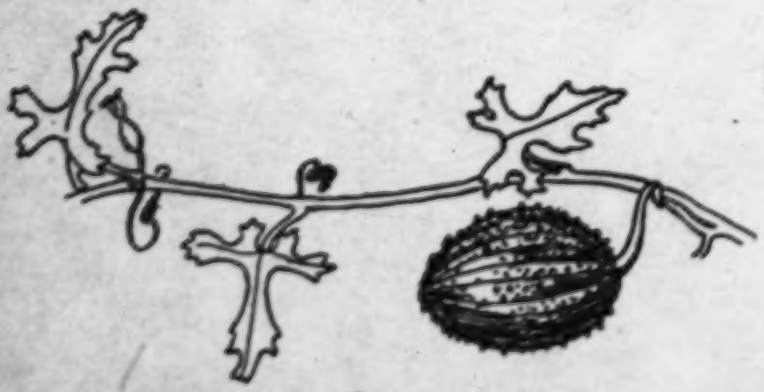

FIG. 3

Cucumis prophetarum (Crowfoot)

cucumber called *kwol*, or *kwol yang*, cow's cucumber (*Cucumis prophetarum*) which grows wild on cultivated sites.[1] If necessary, animal sacrifice is made later, when a victim can be acquired. Nuer also sacrifice this cucumber in minor anxieties, as when they have bad dreams or have committed petty incest. It is treated as though it were an animal victim. It is presented and consecrated, an invocation is said over it, and it is slain by the spear, being cut in half along its edge. The left, or bad, half is then thrown away and the right, or good, half is squeezed and its juice and seeds rubbed on the chest and forehead of the officiant and maybe on others present. This half is afterwards put in the thatch over the entrance to the byre, or sometimes to the dwelling-hut. In cases of petty

[1] I have described it in some earlier accounts as 'a yellow tomato-like fruit'. This is probably the Nuer *kot* (*Solanum incanum*) and not their *kwol* (*Cucumis prophetarum*): *vide* Grace M. Crowfoot, *Flowering Plants of the Northern and Central Sudan*, n.d., Nos. 34 and 129. I am indebted to Dr. Lienhardt for the correction of this unfortunate error.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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782 incest a fruit of the sausage tree (*Kigelia aethiopica*) may be cut
[137] in half, though I am uncertain whether this constitutes a sacrifice *in sensu stricto*.

We have discussed to whom sacrifice is made and what is sacrificed. We have now to ask by whom it is made, and when and where. We have first to distinguish between the person (or social group) on whose behalf it is made, whom we may speak of as the sacrificer, though with some danger of misunderstanding, because he may not take an active part in the rite performed on his behalf, and those who act on his behalf, the actors in the drama.[1] There may be a number of these. Several people may take part in the consecration and several men may deliver invocations. One man may present the victim, another consecrate and make the invocation over it, and yet another slay it. Nevertheless, there are always one or more prime actors, those who make the consecrations and invocations, which, rather than the actual killing, constitute for Nuer the main acts in the series of rites making up a sacrifice; and we may therefore speak of anyone who, after consecrating the victim, makes an invocation over it as the officiant. There may be several of them. In certain sacrifices, particularly those of the collective kind, whoever else may invoke God, one or other particular functionary either must do so or it is thought highly desirable that he should do so. I discuss in Chapter XII the sacrificial roles of these various functionaries in Nuer society. Normally any senior man, usually the head of the family of the sacrificer, can officiate at personal sacrifices. He would generally be one of the sacrificer's paternal kinsmen but it would not matter if he were not. The sacrifice is to God and not to ghosts, and it therefore does not matter who officiates. A youth would not officiate if there were
[561] an older man present, but this is a matter of social convention only: there is no ritual bar to his acting. Women do not sacrifice.
[562] They may assist in the act of consecration with ashes and they may pray, but they do not make invocations or slay victims. Neither the sacrificer nor the officiant has to be in a state of ceremonial purity. This is an idea entirely unknown to Nuer.

It is obvious that in the collective sacrifices the rites must have to some extent a determined place in the whole social activities of

[1] Hubert and Mauss, *op. cit.*, pp. 48 seq., make the distinction by using 'sacrifiant' and 'sacrificateur'. A word corresponding to 'sacrifiant' is not so easily formed in English.